In the Claims:

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~the~~ protection switching of transmission devices, comprising:

at least two switching devices ~~(NA, ND)~~ which in each case terminate a transmission section formed of operating links ~~(WEA-D, WED-A)~~ and/or protection links~~(PEA-D, PED-A)~~, and between which information is exchanged over ~~this~~ **the** transmission section, wherein~~,~~

in the case of a fault on the relevant transmission section, the information ~~hitherto~~ transmitted over ~~this~~ **the** section is diverted~~, as necessary,~~ to the protection link in accordance with the determination of priority criteria and logical connection information,

~~characterized~~

~~in that~~ the information is linked into MPLS packets, ~~in~~ **such** that two oppositely directed unidirectional MPLS connections are logically associated with one another, the two oppositely directed MPLS connections in each case connecting the same switching devices,

~~in that~~ a number of linear transmission sections are joined together so that a ring line system is formed, wherein operating ~~link and~~ protection ~~link~~ **links** are conducted via different physical paths, and

~~in that~~ a multiplicity of protection links ~~(PEA-D, PEC-B, PEC-D)~~ share a jointly reserved transmission capacity.

2. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ **wherein** a unidirectional ring line system is formed by using unidirectional switching devices, ~~but~~ **and** the logical association of the two oppositely directed unidirectional MPLS connections is ~~still~~ retained.

3. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2, characterized in that,~~ **wherein** in the protection switching case, a protection switching request is generated to which other priorities are assigned.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~to 3, characterized in that,~~ **wherein** the logical connection information is the MPLS connection number~~(Label Value)~~.

5. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~to 4, characterized in that,~~ **wherein** local and global priority tables are provided in which the order of rank of the priorities is specified.

6. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** when a protection switching request arrives in the receiving switching device, a protection switching protocol is generated which is supplied ~~only~~ once to the transmitting switching device via the protection link~~(PE)~~.

7. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** a total failure and degradation of an operating link are determined in the monitoring device of the receiving switching device.

8. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** the switching devices are constructed as MPLS cross-connect switching systems.

9. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** the protection switching~~, if necessary,~~ is effected by driving a switching device ~~(S1) contained~~ **included** in the transmitting switching device and by using a selection device ~~(SN)~~ arranged in the receiving switching device.

10. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** special data are transmitted via the protection link ~~(PE)~~ at times free of operating disturbances.

11. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 10, wherein** the special data are arranged as low-priority traffic which are automatically displaced from ~~said~~ **the** low-priority traffic in the case of protection switching of the high-priority traffic.

12. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 9, wherein** the selection device ~~(SN)~~ is constructed as a switching network and/or as a simple switching element.

13. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** the protection switching protocol is exchanged cyclically between the transmitting switching device and the receiving switching device.

14. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, further comprising:**

group protection switching ~~is~~ provided in ~~that all~~ **the** MPLS connections conducted via the same physical path are logically combined to form a group, and for the group formed ~~in this manner~~ at least two protection switching connections are generated, in each case one of ~~these~~ **the** protection switching connections being set up via an operating link ~~(WE)~~ and another one of ~~these~~ **the** protection switching connections being set up via the protection link~~(PE)~~.

15. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that,~~ **claim 14, wherein** in the case where group protection switching is provided, the monitoring devices ~~(ÜE0...ÜEn) only~~ monitor the at least two protection switching connections.

16. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed ~~in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ **claim 1, wherein** the connections conducted via the at least one operating link ~~(WE)~~ and the connections conducted via the protection link ~~(PE)~~ are set up via an MPLS signaling protocol which also reserves bandwidth in the transmission devices and specifies the path of the operating link ~~(WE1)~~ and of the protection link~~(PE)~~.